



(U//FOUO) A Day in the Life of a FAD Employee in Baghdad

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This article is reprinted from the May Foreign Affairs Digest. We thought you'd be interested to hear an account of "life on the ground" in Iraq. -- The editor (U//FOUO)

(U) I recently had the opportunity to spend three months in Baghdad. What we perceive to be normal here is quite the contrary in Baghdad.

(U) A normal day in Baghdad for FAD (Foreign Affairs Directorate) personnel is quite interesting. One quality that is useful to have is being a heavy sleeper. Luckily I have that trait. I slept through window rumbling, earth shaking, and exploding car bombs that were only a half kilometer away.



(U//FOUO) [REDACTED] DP3, during his recent deployment to Baghdad

(U) People living at the Villa slept in trailers called "pods." Each pod had enough room for two bunk beds, four lockers, a TV, a refrigerator and a microwave. One of the nice features of the pods is a bathroom with a shower, toilet, and sink. Each person within the pod had to be considerate of the amount of hot water they used; otherwise, the last person to get up in the morning would sometimes have to take a cold shower.

(U) A normal morning consists of being awakened by roommates, or an exploding car bomb, or the thundering rumble of helicopters flying 75 feet above. Unfortunately, the Villa is located in the direct path of Landing Zone Washington, the major LZ for the Green Zone. After being at the Villa for a couple of weeks, I found it easy to differentiate between types of helicopters just by their sound.

(U) Once showered and dressed, and with Beretta strapped on, I was ready to begin the day. The chow hall, which is only a short walk away, usually serves eggs, bacon, potatoes, oatmeal and most importantly, coffee. The coffee is not gourmet, but after a few weeks, it begins to taste good. After breakfast, it is time to suit up with body armor and wait for the Personal Security Detail (PSD) to pick us up with their armored turbo diesel Ford Excursions.

(S//SI) A normal day consists of four SIGINT personnel heading out to the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) building around 0900. Usually, three are from NSA and the fourth is from GCHQ. We pick up the GCHQ person from the British compound, which is about a kilometer from the Villa.

(S//SI) We then head to the INIS building, which is about a kilometer away from the British compound. On our way, we pass by the main Iraqi government headquarters and the Al-Rasheed Hotel (the old Ba'ath party hangout). Even though we go through a few checkpoints, we are still inside the Green Zone. Once at the INIS compound, we exit the vehicle and the PSD team walks us around the perimeter to the building entrance. This walk takes about five minutes and has us pass by lines of Iraqis being searched prior to entering the Green Zone.

(S//SI) I consider the INIS building to be in the "Orange Zone." It is not in the Red Zone (which is everywhere except Green Zone), and it is not in the Green Zone but borders it. The compound is protected from the Red Zone with armed guards and blast walls. Once inside the INIS compound, the PSD team escorts us into the INIS building and up to the eighth floor, where the Iraqi SIGINT Element (ISE) and the "US Only" room are located.

(S//SI) On the way to the eighth floor, we pass by armed Iraqi guards and INIS workers who are very friendly. Every once in a while, we catch a glance from a construction worker in the building who, at the very least, we can tell is not very fond of the Americans being there.

(S//SI) Once in the "US Only" room, we conduct a turnover with the shift that has been on duty all night. After the PSD team and the night shift leave, we check with the Iraqi translators, analysts, and operators to make sure everything is working smoothly. Throughout the day we monitor High Powered Cordless Phone (HPCP) comms on the Digital Receiver Technology (DRT) unit and the ONEROOF system. We also take highlights and time sensitive information, also known as tippers, from the Iraqi translators and enter them into a database. If the intelligence is time sensitive, we contact the NSAers back at the Villa and pass the tipper over to them so they can put it on NSANet for dissemination.

(S//SI) Throughout the day, we help the Iraqis with whatever problems they may have with ONEROOF or the DRT (or, as they know it, the VIPER unit). At lunchtime, there are three choices: Iraqi food, Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) or American food at the Al-Rasheed hotel (if the threat level is low enough). Often, the Iraqi food is good. However, the hygiene is not top notch, so people try to limit their consumption of Iraqi food.

(U) Quite often random gunfire can be heard as close as 300 meters away. There would also be mortar attacks on a fairly regular basis.

(S//SI) Around 1800, the PSD team returns and picks up two of the four SIGINTers out at the INIS building and takes them back to the Villa or the British compound for the night. The other two SIGINTers stay at the INIS building until pickup the next morning. SIGINTers staying the night at INIS assist the Iraqi partners and relay tippers. During the middle of the night, when collection is slow, we sit and talk with the Iraqis, building trust and friendship.

(U) Those NSAers returning to the Villa with the PSD team still have a few more hours of work to do. After eating we go to the FAD trailer to finish working for the day.

(U) At 2000, the daily highlights are sent out for analysis. After all of the work is finished, usually around 2200, we have a few activities available to us: head to the bar, go to bed, watch TV or a movie, or surf the web in the Morale, Wellness and Recreation center. Every night we can find someone hanging out at the bar, unwinding, but not unwinding completely because half the time there are incoming mortars. Once it is bedtime, it is pretty easy to ignore the constant stream of helicopters flying over the POD because of how tiring the day has been. All will be repeated the next day.

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